



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
White River Field Office
220 East Market Street
Meeker, Colorado 81641



In Reply Refer To:
4700

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

**Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area
Wild Horse Gather Plan Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-CO-110-2010-0089-EA**

I have reviewed the Final Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather Environmental Assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-CO-110-2010-0089-EA. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, and incorporated herein, I have determined that the Alternative A (Proposed Action), Alternate B and Alternative C (No Action) with the project specifications, including minimization or mitigation measures identified in the EA, would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required to be prepared.

This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

Context: The gather area is administered by the Bureau of Land Management's White River Field Office. The affected region is limited to the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA), and those areas outside of the PEDHMA where wild horses were identified through the 2010 survey. The PEDHMA is located in northwestern Colorado, southwest of Meeker and approximately 50 miles northeast of Grand Junction. The herd management area encompasses 158,281 acres of federal land managed by the BLM, WRFO and 31,741 acres not managed by the BLM. All of the PEDHMA is within Rio Blanco County, Colorado. In February 2010, the BLM completed inventory flights of the PEDHMA, using a direct count method and estimates a population of 318 head of wild horses within and 183 wild horses located outside the PEDHMA boundary. BLM in coordination with the contractor will chose trap sites prior to each gather but locations may be changed and additional traps may be required to capture wild horses that have become wise to helicopters or relocated outside of the PEDHMA.

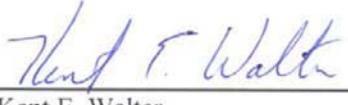
Intensity: There is no evidence that the severity of impacts is significant:

1. The proposed action is expected to meet BLM's objective for wild horse management of maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship consistent with other resource needs. The EA considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the

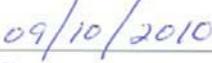
gather and removal of excess wild horses from inside and outside of the PEDHMA boundaries. Standard Operating Procedures 2010 (Appendix A) would be followed to minimize stress on wild horses and burros and impacts to other resources. BLM will remove excess wild horses from the project area; removed wild horses would be transported to wild horse and burro holding facilities and prepared for adoption, sale or long-term holding pastures.

2. The proposed action has no effect on public health or safety. The Standard Operating Procedures 2010 (Appendix A) would be used to conduct the gathers and they are designed to protect human health and safety, as well as the health and safety of the wild horses. The proposed action would have minimal affects to public health or safety.
3. The proposed action has no potential to affect unique characteristics such as historic or cultural resources. There are no wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas present in the areas. There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers within the gather area. BLM will conduct archaeological site clearances prior to the construction of temporary gather sites and holding facilities. If WRFO discovers cultural resources in an area, a new location would be determined to set up temporary gather sites and holding corrals. BLM will not conduct wild horse gather activities within Wilderness Study Areas.
4. The BLM does not consider the effects of the proposed action on the quality of the human environment to be highly controversial, and effects of the gather are well known and understood. The effects that would occur from implementation of the gather are well known and understood based upon previous gathers. The WRFO did not identify any unresolved issues based on comments from public notification of the proposed gather. Comment response within the EA documents that all issues were addressed through the effects analysis. Some members of the public have the view that “no wild horses should be removed from any public lands” and advocate removal of livestock or letting “nature take its course.” However, BLM has documented the effects of wild horse gathers on the quality of the human environment through the many years of management of wild horses and burros gathers and other population controls, and determined they are not highly controversial.
5. Possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks. The proposed action has no known effects on the human environment which are considered highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. WRFO’s EA effects analysis has documented the known effects on the human environment.
6. The proposed action is compatible with future consideration of actions required to improve wild horse management in conjunction with meeting objectives for wildlife habitat within the PEDHMA. As a result of implementation of the proposed action, all excess wild horse will be removed from and adjacent to the PEDHMA to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship.

7. The proposed action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts. Future projects occurring within the gather area are evaluated through the appropriate NEPA process and analyzed under a site-specific NEPA document. The proposed action, Alternative A does not set a precedent for future actions, and is not related to other actions within the project area that would result in cumulatively significant impacts. Proper NEPA analysis would be completed for all proposed actions in the future. Cumulative impacts were analyzed in the EA.
8. The proposed action has no potential to adversely affect properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and would not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The proposed action would not affect significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The WRFO would conduct a cultural resource inventory prior to gather site and corral construction to determine the presence of sites that are unclassified, eligible, or potentially eligible for listing. Archaeological site clearances and avoidance measures would ensure that loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources does not occur.
9. The proposed action would have no effect on any other threatened or endangered species or habitat determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act. No animals listed, proposed, or candidate under the Endangered Species Act are known to make appreciable use of the PEDHMA. Threatened, Endangered or Candidate plant species exist within the PEDHMA. The WRFO would conduct a plant survey in accordance with the 2010 inventory protocol to determine the presence of Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate plant species prior to new gather site and corral construction in potential plant habitats.
10. The proposed action would not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action is in conformance with all applicable 43 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations). The proposed action would not violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or Endangered Species Act.



Kent E. Walter
Field Manager



Date: